

TOWN OF ARLINGTON
TOWN MEETING PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

March 13, 2023

Call to Order

The meeting of the Town Meeting Procedures Committee was called to order by Town Moderator Greg Christiana via online video conferencing on Thursday, March 13, 2023, at 4:02 PM.

Quorum

A quorum was present: Adam Auster, Greg Christiana, Rebecca Gruber, Christopher Moore, and John Worden.

Topher Heigham, Xavid Pretzer, and Paul Schlichtman were also present.

There were no comments.

Minutes

Mr. Moore moved to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2023, meeting.

Ms. Gruber seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Reports

*Committee
Membership*

Mr. Christiana reported that he had consulted with Town Counsel about the composition of this Committee as set forth in the Town bylaws.

He reported that Town Counsel advised that the Committee comprises the Moderator, Assistant Moderator, and others appointed by the Moderator.

According to Town Counsel, Mr. Christiana said, past moderators do not serve automatically by virtue of their former office, though they may be appointed by the Moderator in the usual way.

Unfinished Business

HYBRID
TOWN MEETING

Study Committee

Mr. Christiana said it was his sense, based on the discussion at the March 2 meeting, that this Committee is interested in establishing a panel to study a hybrid form of Town Meeting, but does not want to ask Town Meeting to rush into anything.

He said he could ask the Select Board to put an article to establish such a committee on the warrant for the upcoming Special Town Meeting.

Resolution

Ms. Gruber volunteered to draft a Town Meeting resolution to establish such a study committee, and would consult other members of this committee.

Discussion included the instructions, scope, and composition of such a committee, and the likely schedule of its work.

Schedule

Members expressed general support for a committee reporting to the 2024 Annual Town Meeting, with the possibility that work would continue after that.

*Multi-Room
Town Meeting*

Mr. Christiana said a multi-room in-person town meeting is already authorized under state law.

*Legal
Authority*

He cited MGL Chapter 39, Sections 10 and 14, which permits meeting in auxiliary spaces that are presided over by one or more assistant moderators.

The Town Hall Auditorium, he said, would be the principal location under this scenario, with additional satellite space such as the Community Center or a conference room on Town Hall.

Logistics

Mr. Christiana told the committee that preliminary tests of a communications system linking the locations suggest such a link is technically feasible.

Discussion

Discussion included different ways to designate available spaces, the role of an assistant moderator, how to handle recognition of speakers and points of order across locations, and the desirability of limiting and/or disclosing the inevitable side communication with the Moderator related to the conduct of the meeting.

Members discussed possible uses of the handset to ask to be recognized from either location, and for other functions. Members also noted the inability to hold voice votes, and discussed the development of the consent agenda, in a multi-room setting.

Public Health

During the course of the discussion, Mr. Christiana expressed doubts about the wisdom, and, possibly, the legality, of requiring health measures such as masking in the Town Hall Auditorium.

Consequently, he said, designating the Town Hall Auditorium as mask-optional, and the satellite space as mask-required, might be the easiest choice. However, he and members generally explored the idea of recommending health measures in all rooms.

He said that the Town's Health and Human Service director, Christine Bongiorno, told him to expect that about 80% of Town Meeting would want to be in the Town Hall Auditorium even if masking and other health measures were not required there.

A brief discussion of how to handle a member who refuses to follow a masking rule expanded into a consideration of maintaining decorum generally in a satellite space.

Future Meetings

For a future meeting, Mr. Moore expressed an interest in clarifying issues related to rules about speaking when there are amendments on the floor or being made.

MOTION:

Adjournment

Mr. Worden moved that the meeting adjourn.

Mr. Moore seconded the motion.

Mr. Christiana declared that the meeting was adjourned.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:33 PM.

Adam Auster
March 22, 2023

APPROVED:
March 25, 2023

Adam Auster
Greg Christiana
Town Moderator

Documents attached to these minutes:

1. Notice of meeting



Town Meeting Procedures Committee

Date: Saturday, March 25, 2023
Time: 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM
Location: Remote via Zoom posted on the Town's website

Agenda

1. Public comment
2. Approval of past minutes
3. Proposal for hybrid Town Meeting study committee
4. Recommendations for consent agenda items
5. Update on in-person Town Meeting procedures
6. New Business

This will be a Zoom meeting and registration information will be posted.